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JOHN SANFORD BARNES

1836-1911

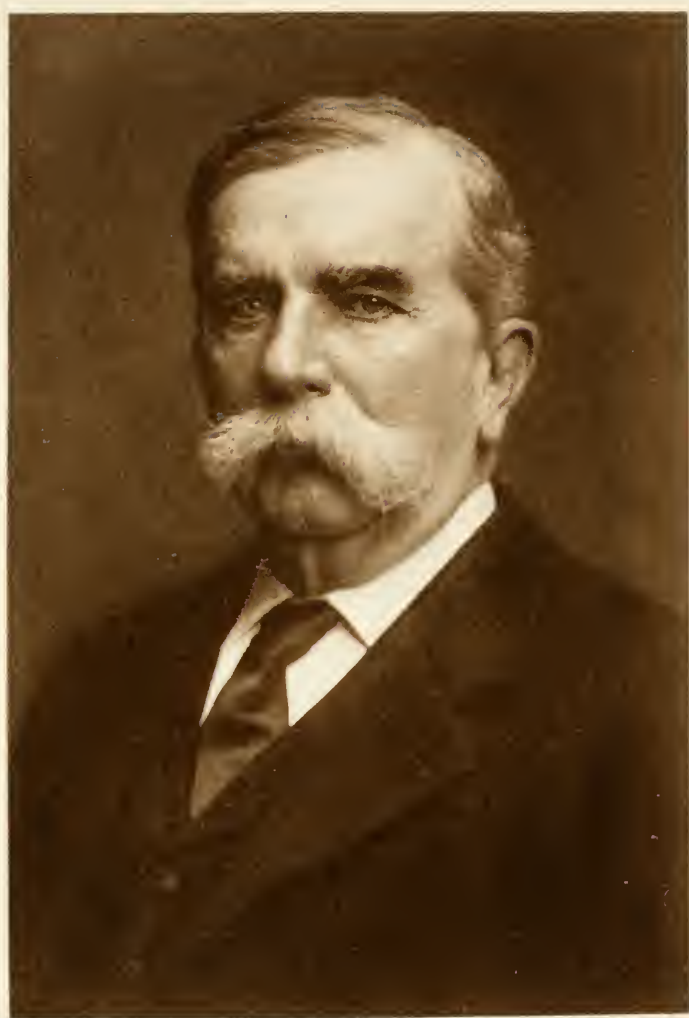
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JOHN SANFORD BARNES

A MEMORIAL AND
A TRIBUTE

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JOHN SANFORD BARNES

A MEMORIAL

JOHN SANFORD BARNES

JOHN SANFORD BARNES was born at the United States Military Academy at West Point on the 12th of May, 1836, his father, Lieutenant James Barnes, U.S.A., being detailed on duty there as assistant instructor. On the 22d of November, 1911, in his home in New York, surrounded by his wife and children and the intimate servants of his household, he passed peacefully to his rest after a brave fight against a painfully lingering illness.

His life was a very full and complete one. He had won the high respect and admiration of all who had met him during his active service in the Navy and throughout his long and successful business career; he had known the devotion of many close and lasting friendships; and he had lived always in the realization of the mutual love and esteem of a happy family circle. It was his good fortune to look back on such a life from the days of his earliest boyhood to the completeness and fulfilment of the ending years.

John Sanford Barnes came of what he himself described as "good old stock." His great-grandfather Enoch Barnes, a prosperous ship-builder of Boston,

was descended from a family that had left England following the religious persecutions of the seventeenth century—a direct ancestor having in the earlier days suffered for his faith in Smithfield Market. Enoch's son Benjamin married twice, his second wife being Deborah, the daughter of John and Abigail James of Boston. They settled in Roxbury, in the old house that stood, until lately, at the corner of Columbia street and the Blue Hill turnpike. Here James Barnes, the father of John Sanford, was born in June, 1805. Benjamin, who as a youth had fought at the battle of Bunker Hill, having, like his wife, inherited considerable property, entered into no profession or mercantile pursuit. But his son James, who at first had had a leaning toward the ministry, suddenly, at the instance of Daniel Webster, changed his mind and accepted an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point. His career there can best be summed up by inserting here an extract from a letter from the superintendent to Daniel Webster, in which he writes:

"You may tell Mr. Barnes that his son is all he could possibly wish. There is not a young man at the institution who sustains a higher character than he does. He promises to make a first-rate officer, and he is an excellent student. He is perfectly unexceptionable in morals. Tell Mr. Barnes, in short, that all that can be said in favor of a young man in his situation, I with pleasure say for his son."

During the four years' course he received not a single demerit, and shared all the undergraduate honors with his classmate Robert E. Lee.

In 1832, while stationed in Fort McHenry as lieutenant of artillery, James Barnes met and married Charlotte Adams Sanford, the daughter of Francis Alexander Sanford of Westmoreland County, Virginia. Returning to West Point, he became assistant instructor in infantry tactics. In August, 1836, two months after the birth of John Sanford, his second son, the young officer resigned from the service and took up the profession of civil engineer. In this he was signally successful; the newly developing railway interests, not only of the United States but of Europe, demanded the service of such trained men as he. Settling down with his family in Springfield, Massachusetts, he was at first connected with the Western Railroad, and afterward became chief engineer and superintendent of the Boston and Albany Railroad. He also built many other roads throughout the country. During 1853 and 1854 James Barnes was in Russia, where he was retained by the Russian government as consulting engineer of the railway from St. Petersburg to Moscow. The opening of the Civil War turned him once more to the army, and he re-entered the service as colonel of the 18th Massachusetts, rising to the rank of brevet major-general of volunteers. He died February 12, 1869.

So much for the immediate forebears of John Sanford Barnes. His early boyhood was spent in Springfield, at the old house on Maple street, between High and Union streets, purchased by his father in 1844. The family had grown to number five children: Susan, William, John, Emilie, and James. At the time of the writing of this memorial two are alive: the eldest, Mrs.

Henry M. Baker of New York, and the youngest, James Alexander Barnes, a resident of Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts.

As a boy John Sanford Barnes was sturdy, independent, and adventurous, a leader among his fellows in the little half-village, half-town community. He stood well in his studies at school, and very early began to show the traits that, developed by manhood, accounted for the success that he made of whatever came his way to do. He had the power of concentration on a set task, a natural instinct for work, a devotion to what he considered duty, and a contempt for anything that was not fearless, fair, and aboveboard. He hated a lie, implied or spoken. Strong and powerfully built, though not tall, he was never afraid to hold his own against odds and defend what he considered his rights, but his fighting prowess never made him anything but considerate of the rights of others. Very early he developed a love for the sea, and in June, 1851, when fourteen years of age, through the interest of William A. Graham, Secretary of the Navy, he received the coveted appointment of acting midshipman in the service, and reported at the newly organized Naval Academy at Annapolis for the examinations, which he passed with credit. Owing to the dearth of midshipmen at sea, opportunity was given for a few of those at the Naval School to accomplish, by hard study, the necessary work of the four years' course in three years. This "Advanced Class"—the first and only one in the history of the institution—was composed of the six who alone succeeded in fulfilling the requirements. The names of those who survived their early youth

became identified with the honorable records of the service. The members of the famous "Advanced Class of '51" were: Selfridge, Miller, Todd, Cain, Stribling, and Barnes. They were the first officers of the Navy to receive "Certificates of Graduation" from Annapolis. Admiral Selfridge, at this writing, is still alive; Admiral Miller passed away but a few years since; Todd died, shortly after leaving the Academy, of consumption; Cain was carried off by yellow fever while serving on the sloop "Falmouth"; Stribling joined the Confederacy and perished, of yellow fever also, on the Confederate States ship "Florida" at Pensacola.

In a memorial such as this it is impossible to enter at length into the early life of John S. Barnes in the service, or to dwell with detail on his most useful work, that was to come later. But a short résumé of both might not be amiss.

After practice cruises in the United States ship "Preble," Midshipman Barnes was ordered to the "San Jacinto," under Commodore Stewart, a veteran and hero of the War of 1812. In this fine frigate he crossed to Europe and to the West Indies. Upon returning to the United States, the young officer was ordered to the "Saratoga," and as there has been included in these earlier pages an estimate of his father's character, given by a superior officer, there may well be quoted here an extract from a letter of Captain E. G. Tilton of the "Saratoga" that tells of the value set upon Midshipman Barnes "in his situation." Captain Tilton writes from Port-au-Prince under date of November 28, 1855, to the Secretary of the Navy, as follows:

" . . . I have appointed Midshipman Barnes acting master of the 'Saratoga.'

"Midshipman Barnes is the most promising officer of his age I have ever been associated with, and I hope the Department will allow him to be examined at this station on Seamanship, and not detach him for this purpose.

"I never heard of this young gentleman until he reported for duty in Boston, and would rather part with one of the masts of the ship than with him."

There is no comment to be made on such high praise as this.

Shortly after this letter was written, the young midshipman was ordered home for examination, and the "Saratoga" being then in the harbor of St. Thomas, an American schooner was found at anchor whose crew had been depleted by yellow fever, and whose officers had died of the fell disease so prevalent in those days in the tropics. Availing himself of the fact that the schooner—the "Hoyt"—had to be navigated home, with the consent of Captain Tilton, Midshipman Barnes volunteered to take her to Philadelphia. With a crew of five invalids he set sail on his first command. When but a few days out he himself developed the fever, and though not able to stand, he succeeded in bringing the vessel safely to the Capes of the Delaware, where he was taken to the hospital. He recovered in time to come before the examining board with the other candidates, and was immediately ordered to the Coast Survey vessel "Vixen," and thence to the "Arctic," the war-ship destined to go down to fame as having made the first survey for the original Atlan-

tic cable. The ship was under the command of Captain O. H. Berryman, and after her return to the United States in October, 1856, Captain Berryman sent to the board of examiners the following letter, dated the 13th of November:

"Gentlemen:

"The honor of presenting you this is given to Midshipman John S. Barnes, who served under my command on board the U. S. steamer 'Arctic,' lately employed by the Navy Department in examining a route across the Atlantic Ocean for the purpose of determining the practicability of laying a telegraphic cable between Europe and America.

"I have very great pleasure in being able to assure the Board of the superior qualifications possessed by this young officer. His mature judgment, gentlemanly and officerlike deportment, with a varied experience in his profession and decided talents for literary and scientific knowledge, fit him already for the more important duties of the higher grades which I think him so worthy to hold."

Once more the examinations were passed with flying colors, and in 1857, although only twenty-one years of age, the young officer was appointed assistant professor of ethics at the Naval Academy. While on leave of absence during this year, he tried civil life; but 1857 was the time of the great panic, business was more or less at a standstill, and he soon found himself afloat again as master of the United States ship "Jamestown."

After cruising some months in the West Indies and

visiting the Isthmus of Panama, where the canal project was then much talked about, he was ordered north to the Portsmouth navy-yard. Visiting his old home at Springfield, he met there an old friend of his father's, Judge Ira Harris of Albany, who, taking a great fancy to him, suggested his giving up the naval service and engaging in the study of the law. After some deliberation and many family councils, he decided on this important change, and resigned his commission as master on October 1, 1858.

The succeeding years passed quickly. After studying some time at the law school in Albany, where he had family connections, John S. Barnes was admitted to the Bar as attorney and counselor-at-law, and formed a partnership subsequently with J. Meredith Reed, Jr. Everything tended toward success, but these were days of great political stress and storm. Mr. Lincoln had been nominated for the Presidency, and bitter feeling had begun to grow between the North and the South. The spring of 1861 found the country disrupted. Before the actual outbreak, the young lawyer had become identified with the State militia as an officer of the newly formed Albany Zouaves. But naturally his instincts and thoughts turned toward the sea, and he offered his services to the Secretary of the Navy, the Hon. Gideon Welles, and hastened to the national capital. On his way from New York to Washington, he carried despatches from the Union Defense Committee to President Lincoln, Mr. Seward, and General Scott. After an interview with the Secretary, John S. Barnes, then but twenty-five years of age, was appointed acting lieutenant and ordered to

the steam-frigate "Wabash" as navigator. On his way back to New York to join his vessel, he stopped in Philadelphia, and while there renewed the acquaintance of old friends and became engaged to Miss Susan Bainbridge Hayes, a daughter of Captain Thomas Hayes, U. S. N., and a granddaughter, on her mother's side, of Commodore William Bainbridge.

From now on to the end of the four years' struggle, he was actively and usefully employed in the career that he had re-entered, and the part that he played is involved in the history of those stirring times and is a matter of record for all to read.

Throughout the dreary work of blockading, in the attacks upon the coastwise forts of the Confederacy, and in many minor actions, he was distinguished by his cool judgment, his forwardness in the line of duty, and the absolute dependence that could be placed in him by his superior officers. Very early he had been restored to the rank of lieutenant-commander in the regular service. As fleet captain he served under no less than four successive admirals—Dupont, Dahlgren, Lee, and Porter; and although a good proportion of his time was spent on the "Wabash" and other flagships, he commanded in succession the following vessels: the gunboat "Dawn," the "Paul Jones," the "Lenape," and the "Bat."

On September 12, 1863, while on a short furlough, Captain Barnes married Miss Hayes in Philadelphia. His letters to his wife, previous to and after their happy marriage, would be valuable contributions to the history of the times. Full of comments on the doings of the day, the movements of fleets and armies,

they contain pen-pictures of the leading men and vivid accounts of important events that were taking place. But not only this, they reflect a spirit so pure and manly, and an affection so deep and lasting, that they breathe the very essence of his personality and contain the unconscious summary of his sterling character. To his own particular performances he referred with a touch of humor, always; but he could be serious enough in his comments on affairs in general. The praise that was due him is to be found on the tongues and in the words of other men, and in the despatches of his superiors. Many were the positions of importance that were given him, and many were the positions of danger in which he found himself. To the first he brought a rare combination of decision, self-reliance, and efficiency; to the second, the fearlessness that means, not non-realization of surroundings, but forgetfulness of self. As the war drew to a close, Captain Barnes was employed mostly with the fleet that was operating in the Chesapeake and adjacent waters. During the last weeks of the struggle he was closely associated with President Lincoln, accompanying him on his visits to Petersburg, and being one of the little party that struggled into Richmond at the time of the President's venturesome and historic visit.

The war over, Captain Barnes was ordered to the Naval Academy, then—in 1865—at Newport, Rhode Island, it having been moved thither in 1861. He was at once assigned to the command of the "Marblehead," the midshipmen's practice-ship, and after a short cruise he brought her to Annapolis, where in the autumn he began his duties as head of the department

of ethics and English studies, acting also as instructor in seamanship and naval tactics. The following summer he had command of the practice-ship "Savannah." During these busy years Captain Barnes found time to write and have published his book, "Submarine Warfare," the first important work on the use of torpedoes. It is, even to-day, a text-book, and has been translated into many languages.

His thoughts often turned to civil life, which he had begun so auspiciously, and in the summer of 1868, having obtained a long leave of absence, he departed on a trip to the West with his father, General Barnes. The latter had just been appointed commissioner by the government to report on the condition of the Union Pacific Railroad, which had progressed in its construction as far as Cheyenne. Returning from this journey, which was full of adventure and interest, Captain Barnes determined finally on leaving the service, a determination hastened by the failing health of his father, who was suffering from the effects of the wounds he had received at Gettysburg as well as from the old camp-fever that had never left him. As before stated, General Barnes died on February 12, 1869. At the time his son was still on his leave of absence. This interval had been put to such good use that during it Captain Barnes had received many offers to undertake important positions in business life. In February, 1869, he sent in his resignation and found himself a citizen again. In the meantime he had moved to Elizabeth, New Jersey, the home of his married sister, Mrs. Henry M. Baker, through whose husband he became acquainted with the late John S. Kennedy,

ultimately forming a partnership with the latter that lasted until February, 1880, when by mutual consent the partnership was dissolved. For a time Captain Barnes, who had bought a seat in the Stock Exchange, —the floor of which he seldom or never visited,—continued successfully in business for himself, at last—in the early nineties—retiring gradually from active participation in affairs. His health was at that time unimpaired; his desire to live, and to enjoy life keenly, still with him as in youth; so with a united and loving family that had only once been visited by death—when, in the summer of 1881, he and his wife had lost their eldest daughter—he became a seeker after content and happiness. But never was he an idler; never was he unemployed.

He possessed many sides, many capacities for enjoyment; he had pleasure in the “sense of possession,” and the good judgment that comes to the true art-lover and collector; he delighted in good pictures and rare old china, and his country house at Lenox, Massachusetts, and his city home on Seventy-ninth street, New York, contain many beautiful things, not prized because of their intrinsic value, but because they had been slowly acquired and chosen by himself. He had a personal affection for them, as he had for his books and papers. Shortly after leaving the service—indeed, while in it—he had begun the collection of memorabilia—books, engravings, prints, autograph letters, and so forth—dealing with the history of the Navy during the Revolution and the War of 1812. This was a life-work with him, not merely a hobby to pass the time. His knowledge on the subject was accurate and exhaust-

less; with his own hands he had done much of the inlaying and gathering together of plates and pages; he could lay his hands at any moment on the right volume or the sought-for pamphlet. Just previous to his death he had compiled and published, as the first volume of the Naval History Society, of which he was a founder, a monograph on John Paul Jones entitled, "The Log Books of the 'Serapis,' 'Alliance,' and 'Ariel,'" in which he disclosed some important historical discoveries. But it was not only in "the delights of a man of letters and the library lamp" that he took enjoyment. Out of doors tempted him always; he enjoyed shooting and fishing, was fond of horses, and rode, up to the time of his first severe illness, every day along the Berkshire country roads. Bicycling and golf did not come too late for him to take up. When long past sixty he could cover, awheel, many miles a day, and his delight in a game on the links was a pleasure to see.

Captain Barnes belonged to many clubs and societies, but his chief interest in the city was centered at the Metropolitan Club, and in the country in the Lenox Club, of which he was president. He had been a member of the board of directors of the New York House of Refuge, the Home for Juvenile Delinquents at Randall's Island; and was one of the managers and organizers of the New York Zoölogical Society, in which he always manifested much interest, as he did also in the Geographical Society. He was the first president of the Naval History Society, and one of the moving spirits in its organization. His connection with the railroad interests in the West and Southwest

during his active business career had proved him possessed of great capacities for organization and management, and these gifts were recognized by those who served with him on the committees and boards of the various institutions and societies.

It is chiefly by his social qualities, however, that the majority of Captain Barnes's friends will remember him; for, as his older intimates and acquaintances who had known him in the days of war and struggle and work passed away, he grew into the lives and interests of younger men. His cheering presence, his adaptability, his force of character and powers of conversation, made him still a leader and welcome to their companionship, and it was not to his years alone that he owed the sincere respect in which they held him.

In his family life his dominant personality made him the center. Without exacting, without demanding, he obtained obedience to his wishes. The habits of the service, that stayed by him for years and that might have made him appear stern to the casual eye, softened as he grew older. He was *just* to others, as he was just to himself. But only those who knew him in this close relation were aware of the depth of the emotional and sentimental side he possessed, to the outward signs of which he seldom gave way. His memory was wonderful: names, dates, and occurrences were collated in his mind, to be called upon at will, no matter how long it was since they had been laid away. He was fond of poetry, and could repeat verses and stanzas learned as a boy at school, without an effort at the recalling. His sense of humor was delightfully spontaneous, his fund of anecdotes endless;

he often used them to illustrate what he was saying, and they were always illuminating. As he was sincere in his love, his likings, and his expressions of thought, he seemed to bring out sincerity in others in their daily contact with him. His servants, like his sons and daughters, felt this influence; their devotion was not lip-service—it was from the heart. During the long illness that preceded his death, his gentleness, his thoughtfulness of others, and his unvarying cheerfulness were the key-note of a perfect resignation. Calm and unworried, he was assured in his mind about so many things that truly it might have been said of him, he felt he had known happiness, he had lived, loved and had been loved; and he passed to his rest, after a long and useful life, content in this knowledge and in the sense of a great peace.

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John Sanford Barnes

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A Tribute

Tribute to
Captain John S. Barnes

by

The Rev. Arthur J. Gammack

*Being an extract from a sermon preached in Trinity Church,
Lenox, November 26, 1911*

THERE died last Wednesday a man whose place among us was such that I am taking advantage of the familiarity of the family circle of this congregation to speak of him this morning. I refer to Captain John S. Barnes, senior warden of this church.

His achievements as a naval officer, as a man of business, and as a literary man will be spoken of elsewhere and more appropriately. I will speak of him as the man whose heart was revealed to me in the intercourse of friendship. I think of him as I recall him in the last years of his life, but against the background of the more active life he lived before it was my privilege to know him.

Suffering is not only the perfecter but also the revealer of character, and what he was in his last,

long illness can only be described by the word "tender." He was tender as only the strong can be.

How reasonable, in the light of that strong, purposeful life, is a belief in immortality! In affectionate interest we follow him through the experience of death to the sphere of his present activity, and our feelings find expression in the words that Matthew Arnold wrote after the death of his father:

"O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force,
Surely, hath not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labor-house vast
Of being, is practised that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm."

To few men is it given to taste to such fullness the richness of life. And yet he did not halt with the interests of this life. He lived too deeply to say, "This earth is heaven enough for me." What he saw and heard and felt was the basis for the anticipation of what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of men to know—the good things that God hath laid up for those who love Him. Through the experience of human fatherhood he realized the divine fatherhood, and the joy of a happy home life was the foretaste of the bliss of heaven.

Toward the end of his life his mind was much on the subject of the future life. He faced it frankly and firmly, and with a faith that looks through death.

During the last year, in particular, his face was turned toward another world, and in the light that streamed from that realm his life was glorified. In greater tenderness and in clearing faith he was being perfected through suffering. "I see," he said one day last summer—"I see now the purpose of weakness and suffering. It is to make us want to go." Spiritual strength seemed to grow out of physical weakness, as if in anticipation of the final resurrection, when that which is sown in weakness shall be raised in power.

He was ready to die. He had made his peace with men and with God, and he was impatient to go. He was like a confined bird fluttering to its freedom; like a ship, prepared for its voyage, chafing at the restraining cables. When the call came, he cast off the moorings. Buoyed up by faith, on the flood-tide of a full life, he was carried over the bar of death, face to face to meet his Pilot, and with Him to voyage forth into the boundless deep of God's eternity.





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